

## **Attributable to the Boy Scouts of America**

### Regarding Changes in Statutes of Limitations:

Consistent with our commitment to protecting Scouts and upholding our values as an organization, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) strongly supports efforts to ensure that anyone who commits sexual abuse is held accountable. First and foremost, we care deeply about all victims of abuse and sincerely apologize to anyone who was harmed during their time in Scouting. We are outraged that there have been times when individuals took advantage of our programs to abuse innocent children. We believe victims, we support them, we pay for counseling by a provider of their choice, and we encourage them to come forward. It is BSA policy that all incidents of suspected abuse are reported to law enforcement.

Regarding the BSA's general position on statute of limitations reform:

- We support the complete elimination of the criminal statute of limitations for child abuse.
- We support extending the civil statute of limitations against individual abusers and expanding the civil statute of limitations for child abuse on a prospective basis.
- We support some legislation that retroactively reforms the civil statute of limitations.
  - We believe if an organization knowingly concealed or otherwise withheld evidence of wrongdoing, they should be held liable.
  - We also support retroactive statute of limitations reform for claims against individual abusers.
- We believe it is imperative that all convicted abusers serve their full criminal sentences and comply with any post-release requirements to protect children and reduce recidivism.
- We do not oppose efforts to strengthen protections for survivors of sexual abuse, including by reforming civil and criminal statutes of limitations governing allegations of abuse.

We do, however, have concerns with proposals that would impose retroactive liability on organizations that did not have actual knowledge of the specific misconduct underlying an allegation of abuse, and we have expressed those concerns along with other similarly affected organizations, including state education agencies and other community organizations.

The BSA has not engaged in any state lobbying activities in 2019.

### Regarding the BSA's Youth Protection Policies:

In the 1920s, the BSA created a system to bar individuals from Scouting that should not work with youth. That system continues to this day and has been continually updated and enhanced over time. While no system is perfect, the Volunteer Screening Database (VSD) has been and remains a valuable tool in preventing known or suspected abusers from joining or reentering our organization.

The BSA has taken significant steps over many years to ensure that we respond aggressively and effectively to reports of sexual abuse. We recognize, however, that there were some instances in our organization's history when cases were not addressed in a manner consistent with our commitment to protect Scouts, the values of our organization, and the procedures we have in place today.

Today, the Volunteer Screening Database – a tool the Centers for Disease Control recommends for all youth-serving organizations – serves as one of BSA's many strong barriers to abuse, which also include:

- Ongoing mandatory youth protection education for all volunteers, parents, and Scouts;
- A leader selection process that includes criminal background checks and other screening efforts;
- A leadership policy which requires that at least two youth protection trained adults will be present with youth at all times; and prohibits one-on-one situations where adults would have any interactions alone with children – either in person, online, or via text;
- Prompt mandatory reporting to law enforcement of any allegation or suspicion of abuse; and,
- A 24/7 Scouts First Helpline (1-844-726-8871) and email contact address ([scouts1st@scouting.org](mailto:scouts1st@scouting.org)) to report any suspected abuse or inappropriate behavior.

We believe victims and remove individuals based on only allegations of inappropriate behavior. We steadfastly believe that one incident of abuse is one too many and we are continually improving all of our policies to prevent abuse. This is precisely why we fully support and advocate for the creation of a national registry overseen by a governmental entity, similar to the national sex offender registry, of those who are suspected of child abuse or inappropriate behavior with a child, and thus allowing all youth serving organizations to share and access such information. We call upon Congress and other youth serving organizations to support this initiative.

The BSA also regularly convenes leaders from other youth-serving organizations, as well as experts in the youth protection field. Sharing of information is one of the key focus areas of those discussions. Experts note that among the general US population, one in six men have experienced sexual abuse or assault at some point in their lives. This is an unacceptable public health and safety problem that must be addressed, and we seek to be part of the solution along with all other youth-serving organizations.